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SENSITIVE

FOR AF/S P.GWYN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BC](#)  
SUBJECT: BOTSWANA ELECTION: BDP EXPECTED TO WIN AGAIN

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Botswana's general election will take place in one week, on October 16. Because there is no polling data available, any prediction of election results is an educated guess. Embassy officers have monitored the media and spoken with journalists, politicians, and other observers to form the assessments below. We believe that the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) is likely to lose a few seats to the opposition, but appears to be in no danger of losing its overall majority in Parliament, and therefore will retain the Presidency. The newer opposition party BCP is likely to significantly increase its representation in Parliament, and will perhaps surpass the BNF to become the "main opposition." There were only four women elected to Parliament in 2004, and a similar result is expected in 2009. End Summary.

#### BDP Will Retain Majority, But Lose Seats

¶2. (SBU) The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has ruled Botswana since independence in 1966, and most observers agree they will easily win a Parliamentary majority again in 2009. The BDP is the best-known, best-financed, and largest party in Botswana, the only party to field candidates in all 57 constituencies. The ruling party is very strong in Ghanzi, Kgalagadi, Central and Kgatleng districts. Though the BDP is traditionally strongest in rural areas, the ruling party is also fighting hard in urban constituencies and is likely to pick up some seats in Gaborone, Francistown, and Selebi-Phikwe. However, the BDP has been plagued by well-publicized factional bickering, which could hurt the party's image with some voters in marginal constituencies. Also, there are a record 14 independent candidates running for Parliament this year, many of whom are disgruntled BDP members who lost during the primaries and have decided to contest anyway. These independents may draw some traditional BDP voters, which could split the BDP's vote and give strong opposition candidates a better chance of success.

2004 Result: BDP won 44 of 57 total constituencies, giving them a 77 percent majority in Parliament. The total popular vote for BDP was 52 percent.

Prediction for 2009: Best case scenario for the BDP would be to repeat their 2004 result winning 44 seats, while some commentators predict that BDP may take as few as 36 seats (63 percent of Parliament), which would still give them a safe majority. The middle-ground prediction for BDP gives the ruling party 40 seats (a 70 percent majority in Parliament). The BDP's share of the popular vote is not likely to exceed the 2004 level, and could even below 50 percent.

Power Balance Could Shift Between Opposition Parties

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13. (SBU) The Botswana Congress Party (BCP) is poised to replace the Botswana National Front (BNF) as the largest opposition party in Parliament. Many BCP candidates are well-educated, younger professionals, and the party has gained support from many youth, especially in urban and peri-urban areas. In contrast to its rivals, the BCP has not been distracted by in-fighting and instead has focused energy for many months on the 2009 campaign. Also, BCP secured an alliance with one of Botswana's traditional small opposition parties, the Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM). This alliance gives them strength in several constituencies in the north and east. The alliance also shows voters that finally some parts of the opposition can work together. The BCM/BAM alliance is expected to do well in the far north and in urban areas.

2004 Result: BCP won only one seat in Parliament. It received 17 percent of the popular vote.

Prediction for 2009: The BCP/BAM alliance is competitive in about 12 constituencies, according to local observers. They could win up to 12 seats, but 7-10 is a more conservative prediction. However, they do look poised to overtake BNF and become the primary opposition party. The BCP/BAM alliance may take 20-25 percent of the popular vote.

14. (SBU) The BNF, Botswana's traditional "main opposition" party, has suffered perhaps more than BDP from internal fighting. BNF refused to announce their full Parliamentary candidate slate prior to the September nomination deadline due to ongoing disputes. BNF's disorganization and in-fighting has cost them support of some voters, who may defect to BCP. However, the BNF is expected to retain seats in its traditional strongholds in the Southern and

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Kweneng districts, largely due to the support of local traditional leaders there. Also, the BNF continues to have support amongst urban works and it is likely to win some urban seats.

2004 Result: The BNF won 12 seats and had 26 percent of the popular vote.

2009 Prediction: Most observers believe that the BNF will win 6-9 seats. Its percent of the popular vote may also slip below 25 percent.

No Real Change in Women's Representation

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15. (U) In 2004, there were four women elected to Botswana's Parliament, all from the ruling BDP party. In 2009, three BDP women stand a good chance of winning their constituencies (incumbent Venson-Motoi in Serowe South, incumbent Tshiriletso in Mahalapye East, and Mbaakanyi in Lobatse). In addition, two female BCP candidates are also considered to be competitive (Rapelana and Motlhagodi in Gaborone North and Gaborone West-North respectively). Both the BDP and opposition have pledged support for increased female representation in Parliament, but no party has put forth more than three female candidates in 2009. It remains to be seen whether the next President will encourage Parliament to choose women for some or all of the four "Specially Elected" MP slots which will be filled when Parliament convenes.

HAMILTON